UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

April 2, 2001

Frank Marcinowski, Director
Radiation Protection Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington D.C. 20460

Dear Environmental Sampling Project Task Force Members,

This letter is in response to the statement issued by the Committee to Minimize Toxic Waste, dated March 29, 2001. I would like to clarify the reasons for changes between our draft project proposal (dated March 7, 2001) and the final proposal for a project to monitor radiation in the Berkeley community. The project is entitled the Community Access to Information on Radiation in the Environment (CAIRE).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s radiation program recognized community concerns about radiation levels in the East Bay/Berkeley area, and saw EPA's Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking (EMPACT) program as a unique opportunity to possibly gain funding for a community-based radiation monitoring and information access project. EMPACT is a non-regulatory program designed to improve public access to environmental information through cooperative partnerships established between interested stakeholders.

In order to be funded, an EMPACT project must provide valid measurements and employ technologies that will pass rigorous quality assurance and quality control requirements. On March 7, EPA circulated a preliminary draft proposal, for discussion purposes only, among potential project participants and stakeholders that included representatives from local, county and state government, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), the U of C-Berkeley, and interested citizens from the community. Based on a series of meetings in the community, one of the main concerns that the project proposed to address was environmental levels of tritium released from the LBNL. The draft proposal contained real-time tritium monitoring and sampling for tritium in air.

After evaluating comments from numerous reviewers and following several technical discussions, EPA determined that the lengthy validation necessary to apply the ultra sensitive real-time technology did not fit well with the EMPACT program's design, and logistical

obstacles precluded application near LBNL's National Tritium Labeling Facility (NTLF). For example, to operate effectively the equipment needed a stationary, climate-controlled environment located near the sampling site which would have required the installation of several support services. Therefore, this technology was dropped and other sampling methods added in the final project proposal.

As members of the Sampling Task Force, you are familiar with plans for additional environmental sampling that will be occurring in and around LBNL and the existing monitoring and sampling activities. In the final CAIRE project proposal, we included tritium sampling through a combination of precipitation sampling and analysis for organically bound tritium in publically accessible areas around the NTLF. Should the CAIRE project proposal be approved for funding by the EMPACT program, the sample collection would be performed by the project team and analyzed by an independent laboratory, thus providing independent data that will supplement the task force sampling activities. The proposal has several review hurdles to pass before we know whether it will be approved for funding.

I hope this response will help to clarify the reasoning behind our project proposal. If members of the Task Force have additional comments, please feel free to contact EPA Region 9 at (415) 744-2000 or my office at, (703) 564-9290.

Sincerely,

FOR
Frank Marcinowski

cc: Mike Bandrowski, Region 9